

## The Linacre Quarterly

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Volume 50 | Number 2

Article 15

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5-1-1983

[Book Review of] *The Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning, Book One - Basic Teaching Skills*, by Thomas Hilgers, M.D., K. Diane Daly, R.N., Susan Hilgers, B.A., and Ann Prebil, R.N.

John J. Brennan

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### Recommended Citation

Brennan, John J. (1983) "[Book Review of] *The Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning, Book One - Basic Teaching Skills*, by Thomas Hilgers, M.D., K. Diane Daly, R.N., Susan Hilgers, B.A., and Ann Prebil, R.N.," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 50 : No. 2 , Article 15.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol50/iss2/15>

Mackin's work, while quite interesting and indeed very challenging is ultimately quite erroneous. It is so, I suggest, because he has seriously misread both the long Catholic theological tradition concerning marriage and the key document on marriage that issued from Vatican Council II. That document *continues* and *deepens* the traditional understanding of marriage as a human reality of a very specific sort that has God as its author. Human persons enter into this reality when, by free choice, they consent to bring it into being. Once it is in being, they cannot unspouse themselves; and once it is in being they are capacitated, as spouses, to pursue its goods and bring them into being through their own free choices.

— William F. May  
Department of Theology  
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## ***The Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning***

*Book One — Basic Teaching Skills*

Thomas Hilgers, M.D., K. Diane Daly, R.N.,  
Susan Hilgers, B.A., and Ann Prebil, R.N.

*Creighton University Natural Family Planning Education and Research Center,  
601 N. 30th St., Omaha, Neb. 68131, 1982, 214 pp., \$21.95.*

This is the largest and most ambitious manual ever written on natural family planning. It is a standardized case management approach to teaching. One word describes the teaching — PRECISION.

Everyone must understand that Dr. Hilgers believes that the Billings discovery of mucus as an indicator of fertility will rate with the discovery of penicillin as one of the great accomplishments of the 20th century. He says that with enthusiasm, and he trains his teachers in every precise detail of the method.

His goal is to standardize the teaching of natural family planning in the United States. It may take until the 21st century, but I believe Dr. Hilgers will succeed. He lists 12 tools of standardization, 7 qualities of good teachers, and 23 qualities of being professional.

The steps in checking for mucus are: "SOFT" — 1) Sensation, 2) Observation, 3) Finger Testing. There are 22 do's and don'ts about how to check for mucus. Charting seems considerably more complicated than with basic Billings. Words convey ideas. Here, initials convey several concepts. There are a dozen things for a teacher to check in reviewing a chart, and he or she should 1) always use a red pen or pencil, 2) if stamps require changing, place corrections at an angle, and 3) always make corrections together with the client.

There are hints for those coming off the pill, those totally breastfeeding and those partially breastfeeding, those who are premenopausal and those who are infertile.

Dr. Hilgers's teachers use no calendars, thermometers, or cervical examination.

There are three C's of the mucus — consistency, color, change, plus sensation. Follow-up forms are in great detail. Every possible complex situation is given consideration. Nothing is left to chance.

That is the key to success. The success rate is 99.6%. There are 0.4 pregnancies per user couples over the first 12 months as a result of the method not properly working. An additional 4.8 pregnancies occur because of either teaching or using-related error. Couples are told that there are only two behavior patterns. Those who want to achieve pregnancy have intercourse on days that are considered fertile; those who want to avoid pregnancy avoid intercourse on days that are considered fertile. There is no such thing as "taking a chance." If a couple identifies a day as a fertile day and then has intercourse they are behaving in a pattern trying to achieve pregnancy. This is very important because many, especially in the Tongo series and Los Angeles series, identified days as fertile and then "took a chance."

Some 21.2% of couples indicate that abstinence is reasonably difficult or very difficult. However, the vast majority found that abstinence was not deleterious to their overall relationship.

The 23rd and last chapter deals with the scientific studies which have confirmed the method's authenticity. Only 2.4% of women found that it took longer than 40 seconds to check for mucus; 93% found it was easy or very easy to check for mucus.

A total of 97.3% of clients found that the amount of material in the introductory system was appropriate. Explanations were found to be usually or always clear by 99.8% of clients. The teacher is rated for six different items.

Dr. Hilgers is not going to go away. He is going to standardize teaching. He will have success rates better than the pill and the IUD. His continuation rates will be excellent. He will have national and regional meetings of teachers.

Some questions remain. How about the thousands whom Mercedes Wilson has trained in Central and South America with much less detail and precision? How about the thousands who have been taught in India by Sister Dr. Catherine Bernard? The average teacher has an eighth grade education and the average learner, a fifth grade education. How about the thousands whom Sister Mary McHugh has taught in the churches after Mass has ended in Korea? The World Health studies showed 90% of women charted their first cycle well, and 95% charted well after 3 cycles.

Reading Dr. Hilgers's book won't hurt anyone. It will make each of us a better teacher, more likely to acquire a better technique of teaching. We are likely to become more precise. Our goal is to reach every couple in the world. The book is recommended to all.

— John J. Brennan, M.D.

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## ***Know Your Body***

Charles W. Norris, M.D. and Jeanne Owen

*Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Indiana, 1982, 96 pp., \$3.95, paperback.*

This book is a little gem which holds promise of considerable versatility as a resource. It could very well be the book which parents and young teens read together to begin discussions of sexuality. It could certainly be integrated into a junior high or high school curriculum and it could very well be a primer for the learning of fertility awareness.

The book consists of six lucid and understandable chapters on growing older, human sexuality, human fertility, reproductive hygiene, sexual responsibility and